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DE RUEHML #2435/01 3030700
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 290700Z OCT 08
FM AMEMBASSY MANILA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2197
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 002435

FOR G/IWI (ANDREA BOTTFNER)
FOR EAP/MTS

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [KWMN](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [PHUM](#) [RP](#)
SUBJECT: NOMINATION FOR 2009 INTERNATIONAL WOMEN OF COURAGE:
KATRINA LEGARDA

REF: SECSTATE 99729

1. (SBU) This cable responds to the action request of reftel, paragraph 11. Post is pleased to nominate lawyer, author, journalist, and activist Ms. Katrina Legarda for the Secretary's 2009 Award for International Women of Courage (IWOC).

FULL NAME OF NOMINEE: Attorney Katrina Legarda, a.k.a. Maria Carolina Legarda

JOB TITLE/ASSOCIATION: Founding Chairman, Child Justice League

DATE OF BIRTH: September 10, 1954

COUNTRY OF BIRTH: Philippines

CITIZENSHIP: Philippines

ADDRESS: Legarda Compound, Sobriedad corner Ventura Streets, Balic-balic, Sampaloc, Manila

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PASSPORT NUMBER: XX1228137, issued in Manila on May 22, 2008. (The letter 'x' in passport number is intentional.)

DETAILED JUSTIFICATION FOR THE AWARD:

Attorney Katrina Legarda has played a vital role for over a decade in the Philippines' campaign for the protection and advocacy of the rights of women and children, making her today one of the most visible equality activists in the country. Among her most significant accomplishments is the 1999 founding of the Child Justice League, a foundation that provides free legal assistance to abused children and children in conflict with the law, educates others on legal remedies for such children, and advocates for policy reform on their behalf. While maintaining involvement in the Child Justice League, she also serves as legal consultant to the Child Protection Unit Network, which works with the Department of Health and other agencies to improve the quality of care services for abused children. She ably chaired the 7th Asian Regional Conference of the International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN) in Manila in September 2007. She is currently ISPCAN Asian regional coordinator. She is also the president of the Women's Legal Circle, an organization that provides free legal assistance to women and children and funds a jail decongestion program for minors.

A talented and widely respected lawyer, author, journalist, and activist, Legarda was lead counsel in the famous 1997 statutory rape case against a member of Congress, who was ultimately convicted and continues serving his sentence. In the year 2000, as counsel to a woman on death row convicted of parricide, she persuaded the Supreme

Court to recognize the "Battered Wife Syndrome" as a legitimate defense, leading to a reduced sentence. She became a tireless supporter of the Philippines Anti-Violence Against Women and Children Act of 2004, providing legal recourse to victims of domestic violence. She continues to be an outspoken advocate for the enactment and implementation of laws that can further protect the rights of women, children, and other social groups in the Philippines. She is also a member of the recently formed Bantay Korte Suprema (Supreme Court Watch) which is working to ensure that only individuals of strong integrity are appointed to the high court.

In the 1990s, she founded the political party "Abanse! Pinay" (Move Forward! Filipina) to push for women's rights legislation in Congress. The party won its first seat in the House of Representatives in the 1998 national elections, and was reelected in 2001. Moving away from direct political involvement, Legarda has since focused on educating Filipinos to secure and enforce their rights under the law.

In addition to teaching students at several universities on jurisprudence and judicial ethics, among other subjects, Legarda trains judges, prosecutors, social workers, and police personnel in the Philippines on the investigation of crimes involving women and children. She continues to educate the public on women's and children's rights through print, radio, and television. Her regular appearances on the ABS-CBN news network's morning program and a related internet column provide a national outlet for her trusted legal advice to women who are struggling with spousal abuse, child support, child custody, divorce and annulment, and even economic and livelihood issues.

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Assessing her activism from a broader perspective, Legarda demonstrates the spirit enshrined in the President's Freedom Agenda through her support for democracy, good governance, and human rights. She has been a critic of corruption in the Philippines, a key target area for U.S. development assistance, and a vocal supporter of consumer rights. On human rights, she has been an outspoken critic of laws in the Philippines that punish adultery but do not provide for legal divorce, limiting the ability of women to remove themselves from abusive relationships. She has spoken and written about the legal rights of the underprivileged, including the homeless, with a focus on land rights, another target area for U.S. development assistance.

For her contributions, she received the "Women Helping Women" and "Women Advancing the Status of Women" Awards from the International Soroptimist Club, as well as the prestigious Young Professional Award given by Parangal ng Bayan Foundation, which recognizes the national contribution of outstanding Filipino achievers. Legarda participated in a 1992 IVP multi-regional program to the United States on "The Independent Judiciary."

For her role in improving the ability of Filipinos to protect their rights and inform themselves about their rights under the law, particularly women and children, Post encourages the Department to select Attorney Katrina Legarda as the EAP recipient for the Secretary's 2009 International Women of Courage Award.

12. (SBU) Post has informed Legarda of the nomination and, should she be selected, she is willing to accept the award.

KENNEY